

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

July 15, 2009

Today, thanks to the unyielding passion and inspiration provided by Senator Edward Kennedy, the HELP Committee he chairs has produced a proposal that will finally lower health care costs, provide better care for patients, and ensure fair treatment of consumers by the insurance industry.

Like the legislation produced by the House of Representatives, this proposal would offer Americans quality, affordable health care that is there when they need it. No longer will insurance companies be able to deny coverage based on a preexisting medical condition. No longer will Americans have to worry about their health insurance if they lose their job, change their job, or open a new business.

This proposal will bring down costs, expand coverage, and increase choice. Through a health insurance exchange, families and small businesses will be able to compare prices and quality so that they can choose the health care plan that best suits their needs. Among the choices that would be available in the exchange would be a public health insurance option that would make health care affordable by increasing competition, providing more choices, and keeping the insurance companies honest.

This proposal would also control rising costs by investing in preventive care and wellness programs, rooting out waste and fraud in the system, and changing the incentives that automatically equate the most expensive care with the best care. When this proposal is combined with other proposals that the Senate Finance Committee is working on, it's estimated that health reform will cover 97 percent of all Americans.

The HELP Committee's success should give us hope, but it should not give us pause. It should instead provide the urgency for both the House and Senate to finish their critical work on health reform before the August recess. I want to commend Senator Kennedy, Senator Dodd, as well as Senators Harkin, Mikulski, Bingaman, and Murray on the leadership they've shown and the foundation they've laid to reform our health care system.

Categories: Statements by the President : Health care reform, Senate action.

Names: Bingaman, Jesse F. "Jeff," Jr.; Dodd, Christopher J.; Harkin, Thomas R.; Kennedy, Edward M.; Mikulski, Barbara A.; Murray, Patty.

Subjects: Business and industry : Small and minority businesses; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health Insurance Exchange, proposed; Health and medical care : Health insurance, protection of coverage; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Preventive care and public health programs.

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